



Sue Pischke/HTR

**MANCORAD Amateur Radio Club member Mike Martch uses a ham radio on the USS Cobia during the "Submarines on the Air" event Saturday at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc. Amateur radio operators talked to each other from 40 submarine museums and memorial sites to pay honor to the "Silent Service" and the 52 submarines lost in World War II. The event continues from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. today.**

# Calling all submarines

## Amateur radio operators bring USS Cobia's signal back to life

**BY KRISTOPHER WENN**  
Herald Times Reporter

**MANITOWOC** - Amateur radio operators shared their love of communicating over the airwaves around the world Saturday during the "Submarines on the Air" event at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum.

For two days, members of the Manitowoc County Amateur Radio Club (MANCORAD) brought the radio room of the USS Cobia at the Wis-

consin Maritime Museum back to life and shared their knowledge with visitors - including a Boy Scout troop.

Every year during the last week in April, the Submarine Veterans Amateur Radio Association sponsors the Submarine Radio Reactivation Weekend involving dozens of museum submarines and memorial sites in the U.S. and around the world. The weekend honors the "Silent Service" and the 52 sub-

marines lost in World War II.

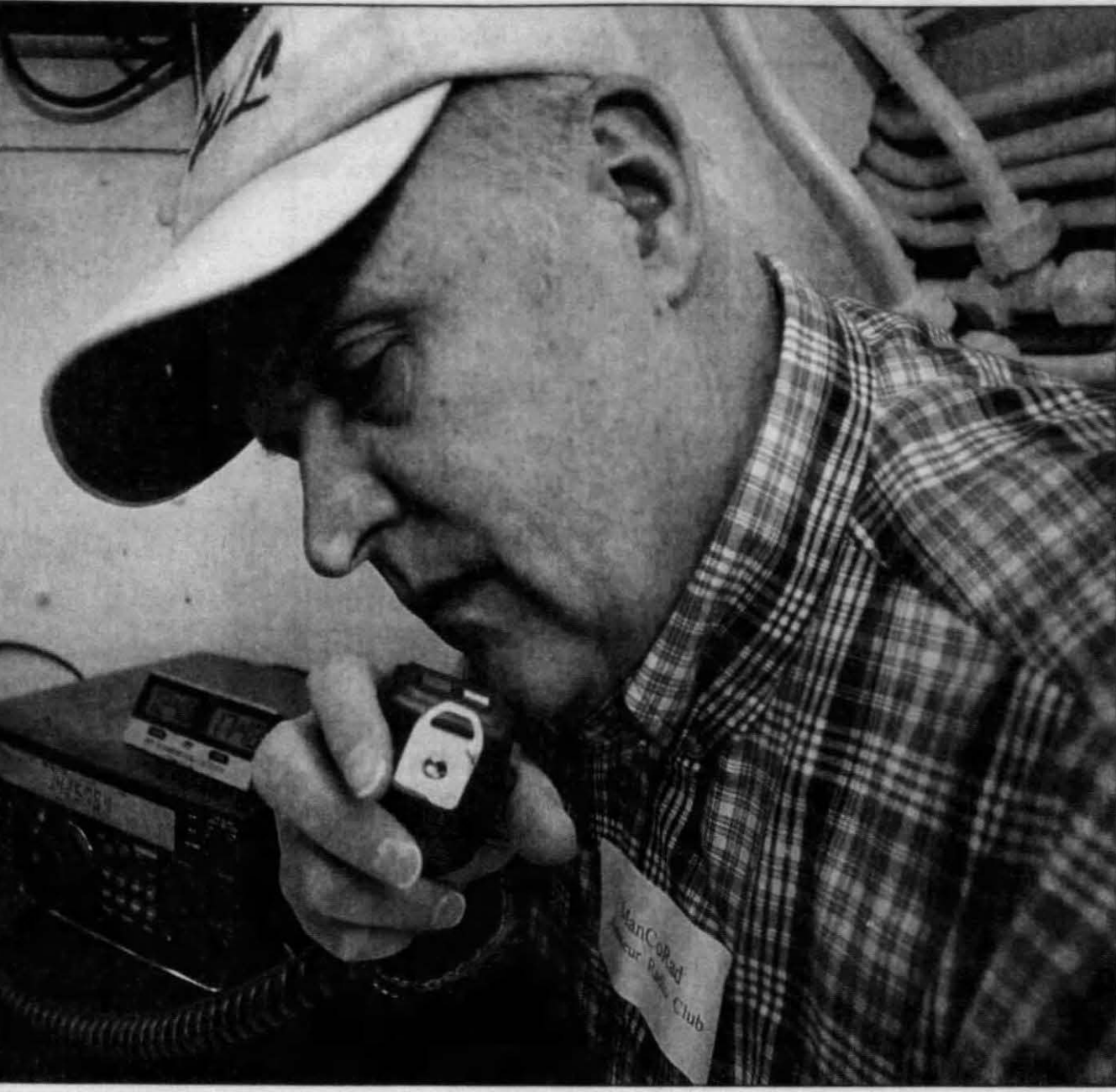
"We try to get as many subs on the air. We get out and broadcast on amateur radio bands to other ships or to radio amateurs who want to talk to the operators on the submarines," said Fred Neuenfeldt, who is also known by his call signal "W6BSF" on the radio waves.

MANCORAD, which is celebrating its 60th year, hosted Boy Scout Troop 612 from Milwaukee on Sat-

urday evening to give the scouts hands-on experience with amateur radio operation in preparation for earning their radio merit badges.

"I'm excited about being on the ship," said Ryan Schaefer, 15, who has been in the Boy Scouts for five years. "The most fascinating aspect is being able to talk between countries over the radio."

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**MANCORAD Amateur Radio Club member Walter Lukitsch of Manitowoc talks with a person from Guatemala as he uses a ham radio on the USS Cobia during the "Submarines on the Air" event Saturday at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc. The event continues from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. today.**

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## RADIO

From A1

On average, the group makes 200 contacts during the event, though one year they were able to communicate with as many as 350 other operators.

MANCORAD members are able to contact operators from as far away as France, Germany and Guatemala when atmospheric conditions are ideal.

"We exchange reports, tell them where we are and how well their signal is coming in. We also tell them about the museum. It lasts about one or two minutes," Neuenfeldt said.

"It's amazing you can talk to somebody about radios, and about different (areas of) the country and different areas of the world. The time goes by quickly when you're exchanging this information," said Walter Lukitsch, also known as "K9WL."

Sometimes operators talk for minutes on end about subjects such as gardening or the weather.

"This is what they call 'rag chewing,' where you have a relative or another amateur radio operator that you talk to a lot and you get on the radio and talk for 10, 20 or 30 minutes," Lukitsch said.

The club mails each contact they make a commemorative

card picturing the USS Cobia and the call sign "N9BQV," the call sign for the USS Cobia Amateur Radio Club, which operates from the museum.

Ham radio operation is more involved than Citizen Band, or CB, radios, club members say, because they are licensed by the FCC and must take written tests on electronic theory and Morse code.

Those skills helped Neuenfeldt, who qualified for a radio operator assignment in Camp Pendleton, Calif., when he was a Marine in the mid-1960s.

With the advent of cell phones and other high-tech devices, amateur radio operators have kept under the radar in recent years.

But they played a critical role in communicating with those in distress during the events of Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City, and again following Hurricane Katrina when the storm blew down cell phone towers along the Gulf Coast last year.

Recently, some MANCORAD members were part of the local response team during an alert issued at the Kewaunee Power Station on April 26.

"We're kind of a back-burner group, when everything else fails then they come running to us," Neuenfeldt said.

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